

My hackNY Design Fellowship application



cheryl wu

[Follow](#)

Dec 16, 2015 · 8 min read

In 2011, I was a Freshman at NYU Gallatin. My close friend [Charles Cary](#) had randomly applied to what he described as “collegiate startup summer camp” the year before. Charles and I built a web design and development small business together in high school called [GREEDYTREES](#).

He encouraged me to apply as a Design fellow. While many in hackNY are focused in software engineering, designers who code are also welcome. I was intimidated by the technical-looking application. At the time I was strong in HTML and CSS, but less so Javascript. I was afraid I wasn’t good enough, but decided to email Evan Korth, one of the founders of hackNY and a professor at NYU.

hackNY Design Fellows?

Cheryl Wu <cherylwu@nyu.edu>
to info

12/18/11

Dear [hackNY](#),

I'm Cheryl Wu and I'm a freshman student in NYU Gallatin. A close friend of mine was a [hackNY Summer 2011 Fellow](#) and he informed me that [hackNY](#) is now also seeking design Fellows. Should I apply with the form [<http://hackny.org/a/students/>] even though some questions are more programming oriented? Should I include a design portfolio?

Thank you,

--Cheryl

Evan Korth evan@hackny.org via nyu.edu
to Cheryl, info

12/19/11

Yes. [Apply](#). Do you code at all?

Sent from my ENIAC

I sent my application 3 days later. Thus began my journey with hackNY — which is much, much more than a summer camp or startup crash course. **hackNY is a true fellowship**. Beyond the incredible summer, hackNY creates a lifelong community of brilliant, inventive, chill, young technologists. Many of my best friends are Fellows.

as an intern at Nasdaq, where 2.5 years later I'm now a full Product Designer.

Here's my application from 2011. I was a noob, yet hackNY took a chance on me. I'm forever grateful. I've added commentary in *italic bold*.

. . .

**[hackNY/2012app]: Cheryl Wu @ New York University ; Gallatin!
(tentatively Design and Entrepreneurship) (BA / 2015)**

hackNYbot info@hackny.org via nyu.edu

12/22/11

to cherylwu, hackny2012

. . .

Dear Cheryl,

Thank you for your application to join the class of 2012 hackNY Fellows!
This confirms your application has been received with the information below.
Please reach out to us at info@hackNY.org with any questions.

class of 2012 hackNY Fellows application received from 173.70.28.242 at 7:58 pm on
December 22, 2011:

. . .

name:

Cheryl Wu

current college/university:

New York University

.edu email address:

contact email address:

grungerabbit@gmail.com

major or phd/ms concentration:

Gallatin! (tentatively Design and Entrepreneurship)

Since 2011 I've since left and returned to Gallatin. My concentration is entitled Visualizing Human Narratives, broadly encompassing art, design, technology, and biology. hackNY helped shape my studies by teaching me about design, code, and data, whilst giving me access to collaborators and help.

next expected degree:

BA

expected graduation date:

2015 lol

link to current transcript, including grades:

<http://>

github:

also lol @ me applying for hackNY before I had a Github. I set up my Github during the Fellowship, and it helped a lot when I started participating in hackathons with other Fellows.

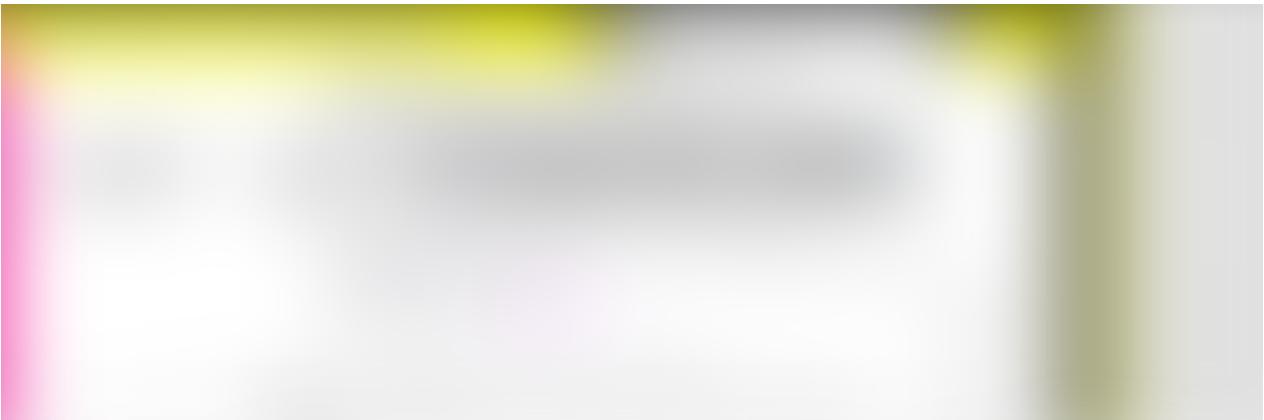
hackerleague:

website:

<http://www.grungerabbit.com>

At the time, grungerabbit.com looked more like this, which was last updated during my fellowship.

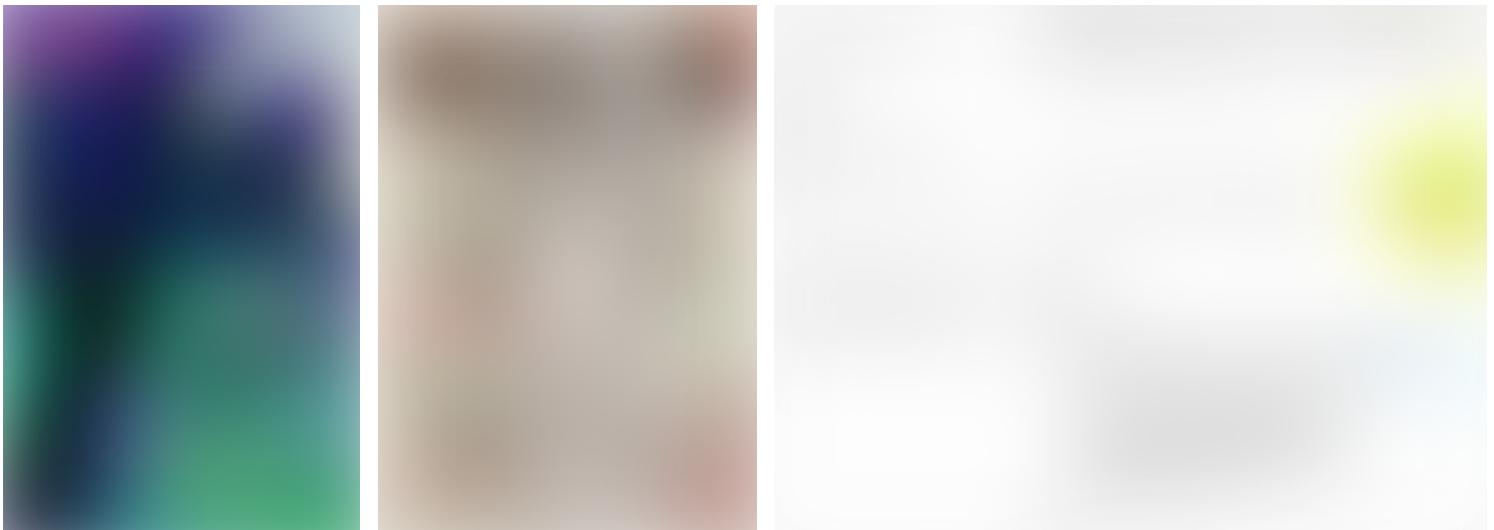




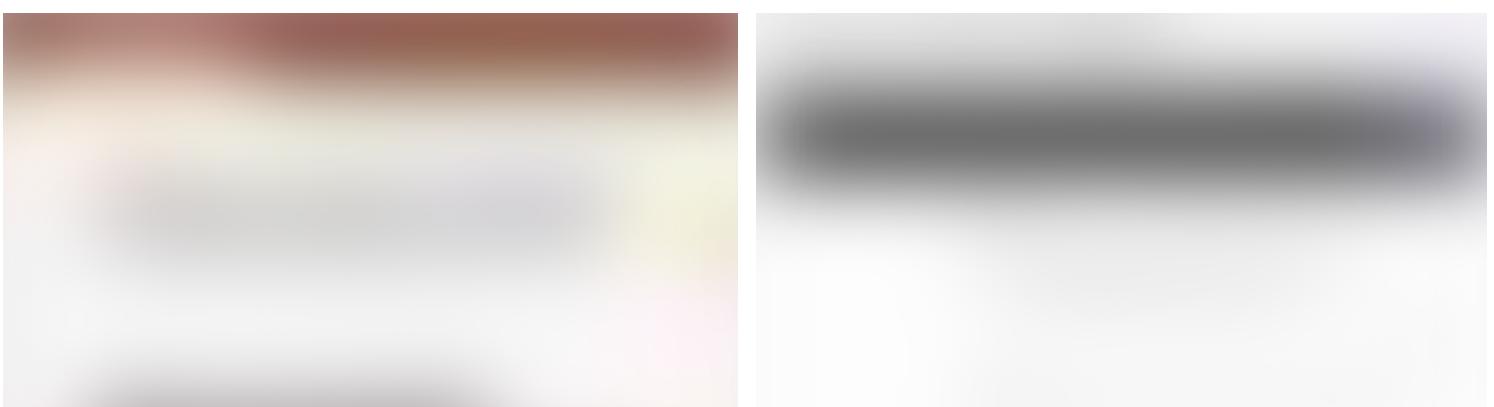
links to any working projects/live demos:

<http://www.btnbt.com/cwweb>, <http://www.btnbt.com/cwdesign>

These links amounted to what's documented on GREEDYTREES, as well as some client work from our original partnership. I also added examples of my graphic design and illustration work.



some examples of things I made from high school



twitter url (optional):

blog (optional):

http://

technical skills/proficiencies/languages:

HTML 5, CSS 3, Javascript; Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign (CS5); Graphic Design, Illustration, Studio Art, Copywriting, Art Direction/Branding, Morse Code

Saying I had Javascript proficiency was a little optimistic at the time. Morse code, however, was real. (These two have switched; I now know much more JS than ... ____...)

short answer: tell us about a time you built something in code. how did you choose it? why did you enjoy it?

In the third grade, I started learning HTML. I “built” a “site” called Angelhaven. It consisted of an angel I drew in MS Paint — so, a circle — in several different colorways, horizontal marqueeing over for all eternity. It was awesome because I was eight. Also, <marquee>.

Angelhaven obviously remains my crowning achievement.

As for something not so pathetic: I've been using the online handle "grungerabbit" since the name appeared in a dream during seventh grade. It has become a name as natural to me as "Cheryl" and is the basis of my brand identity. Like anything that lasts long enough (and becomes terribly embarrassing), my online brand has gone through several incarnations, starting with Neopets, where I taught myself Photoshop and CSS; to GaiaOnline, where I learned to make themes; to MySpace, where I learned to strategically use terrors like "table tr td div div div span div table ol" as CSS selectors. When I was finally gifted my own domain and server space three years later, of course I chose grungerabbit.com. I built it from the ground up, creating patterns, choosing colors, drawing up a logo, writing copy, handcrafting HTML and CSS — and I had no restrictions besides my own ambition. My own website is truly a place to express myself and to experiment with new ideas. It also

have learned.

“Like anything that lasts long enough (and becomes terribly embarrassing),” such as this application...

short answer: tell us about what you hope to learn this summer and why is hackNY right for you.

Although I have experience working on my own websites and on client projects with a partner, I want to see firsthand how web design and startups work in a “real world” setting. I’m not yet sure what kind of design I want to specialize in but web design is definitely on the table, and I know I want to work with technology. I think hackNY will guide my decision. NYC and many NYC tech startups are heavily-design centric, which will provide an excellent learning opportunity suited to my interests and skills. I adore challenges, and working in an environment where there are many talented people to collaborate with will spark my creativity and inspire me to work harder. This summer will build my preexisting skills as well as show me where I need to improve.

My knowledge of the tech scene was evidently limited at the time. “Web design is definitely on the table” was naïve — I was only proficient in visual design and frontend then. However, the following sentences were on point. hackNY challenged me that summer and the “talented people” help me grow, every day.

Additionally, I hope to one day start my own startup, and working in a startup seems the best way to know what startups are like. Working with a hackNY partner means I’ll be contributing directly to a fledgling product and therefore learning how projects get started, as well as how they develop and what contributes to their success. I will also be able to see why certain decisions are made and the factors that lead to tough decisions. I want to be a creator, and hackNY will teach me not just how but why I should create.

“Own startup” remains to be seen. However, the talks during the Summer (and subsequent summers, as a AlumNY guest) are enlightening and truly give a glimpse of what it takes to start a startup. Hint: it’s tons of hard work. Plenty of hackNY’s alumni have become founders and early-stage employees at startups after the fellowship.

attracted a huge following. A high school student reached out to join our AngelHack team, and became a fellow the next year. Jesse and his college friend, another team member at AngelHack, are the founders of the startup Clef in Oakland.

short answer: is there a particular technology or industry you're currently interested in? where do you see it heading in the future?

Good design in general is becoming integral to mainstream products and experiences rather than a niche of collectors, designers, and rich people. I am so excited to eventually become a designer; not only is the market more lucrative, but I truly believe that design can both beautify and improve life. New technologies will make the field even more accessible, in both physical and virtual realms. The Internet means anyone can reach a market, and conversely, that consumers have options and are no longer limited by geographic availability. As better technology is developed, and more end-users adopt it, better products and experiences can be offered. Thus the best-designed products will ultimately have an edge over all others, provided functionality and price are comparable (or better). With already existing tools to create rapid prototypes and to beta/product test, along with improvements in manufacturing and product development, I see a future where there is only good design. That's awesome. I want to help create that world.

Yay @ 18 year old me

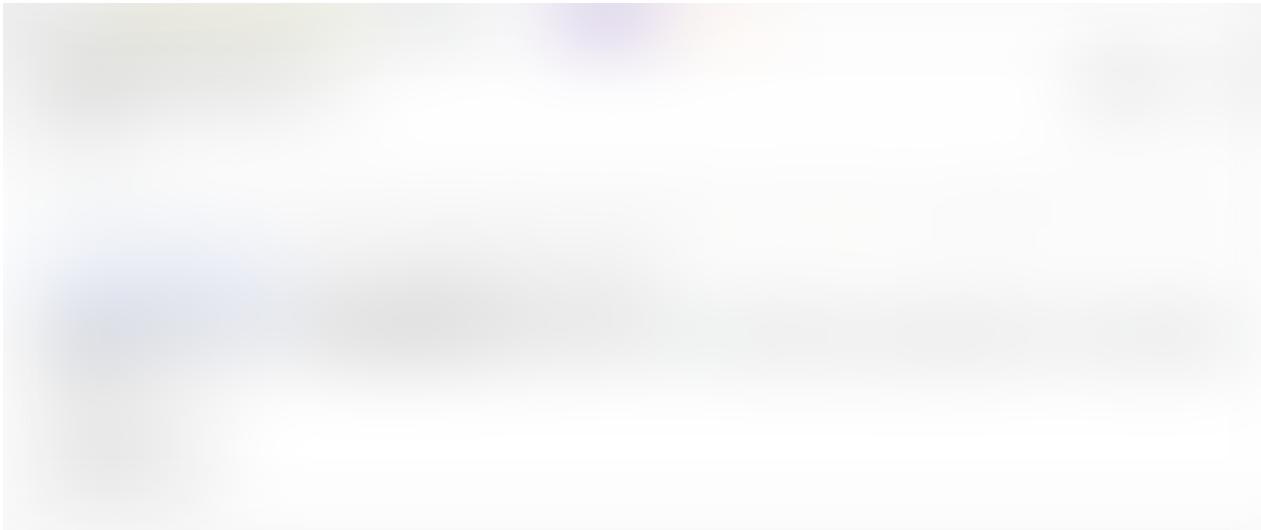
short answer: when you're not coding, what do you like to do for fun?

When I'm not coding, I'm always trying to learn and improve. I like to come up with new projects, paint, experiment with artistic media, dance by myself, make others presents, freak out over fashion, illustrate short stories, write poetry, make Pokemon out of Froot Loops, and butcher languages. Activities less focused on self-help include wandering the city, going to museums and galleries, eating everything, dreaming, attending concerts and other live entertainment, critiquing, bargain-hunting, and identifying typography in real life situations.

I do less freaking out now, but this is still pretty much true.

• • •

I also sent in projects after my submission. hackNY motivated me to redo some projects with Charles over the winter break.



When Charles and I helped build a viral college memes site, I also sent it to hackNY. We did end up raided by /b/ with porn and gore spam — which contributed to killing campusmemes after 200k views and 2 frantic weeks. (The main factor: viral memes ONLY last 2 frantic weeks.)

• • •



hackNY is truly a transformative experience. I am so grateful for hackNY and I encourage you to apply. [Applications for the 2016 Fellowship close tonight.](#) Please reach out if you have any questions! I'm [@grungerabbit](#) on Twitter.

• • •

PS: at the hackNY fellowship kickoff dinner, I met and ate dinner with moot IRL. 10/10 would tempt fate with /b/ again



M

Get started



11 claps



...



WRITTEN BY

cheryl wu

grungerabbit.com && uiuiu.me — tech@NYU creative
director++, hackNY 2012, Tech Collab && Flawless.tech
founder, Nasdaq Product Design, Dinner Party NYC host

Follow

Medium

[About](#) [Help](#) [Legal](#)